

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:45 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. Prior to his remarks, Hillary Clinton welcomed the participants and introduced the President.

Remarks on Signing the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Act of 1995

April 17, 1995

Thank you very much. Thank you, Alice Rivlin, for your hard work on this issue and for being such a devoted resident of the District of Columbia. I told somebody in the Oval Office before we came out here that, unlike a lot of us who are transients, Alice Rivlin's not going anywhere. *[Laughter]* And she desperately wanted this to be done well.

Congressman Davis, Congressman Clinger, Congresswoman Morella, Congresswoman Norton, Mayor Barry, President Clarke, members of the City Council, and other friends of the District of Columbia, this is a very important day and a very important piece of legislation for all of us who care about our country's Capital and for all of us who love Washington as a city. I have lived here not only as President but also as a college student. I know this to be a city not only of our national monuments and political centers but also a city of neighborhoods, of Shaw and Anacostia and Cleveland Park and Adams Morgan and so many others.

So this is a very important day for a city, a city and thousands and thousands of people who live in it, who love it, who care about it, who have lives, many of them who have nothing to do with the politics of the Nation's Capital but who deserve to live in a city that works, that functions, and that also can symbolize the very best in America.

The health of the city and the security of its citizens have been threatened by the financial crisis. And I applaud all those who have come together to work together to begin the road back.

The purpose of the bill I am signing today is just that; it is a road back. The Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Act will speed the District's recovery and return to fiscal health and will help over the long run to improve the delivery of services to its citizens.

For the past 2 years, I've worked hard to turn the economy of our country around. And

we've seen dramatic improvements in the deficit, in the ability of this country to create jobs, and having a Government that is both smaller and more efficient.

But none of that means very much to people whose own lives are troubled with insecurity. And the citizens of the District of Columbia need to know that security, stability, growth, and opportunity will be the hallmarks of their living in our Nation's Capital.

This effort, as Alice Rivlin has said, is proof of what we can accomplish when we work together, when we put the interests of real people first, when we ignore partisan politics, and when we get on with the job at hand.

I want to thank Alice Rivlin, as I said, for all the work that she has been doing. I want to thank the Members of the Congress here present. Congressman Davis, I think, when he came to the Congress, never could have imagined that this would be his first big assignment. *[Laughter]* He is now, I guess, an honorary citizen of Washington, DC. Eleanor Holmes Norton, when she ran for Congress, probably never imagined that this would be one of the most important pieces of legislation which she would have to undertake. But they have worked together in good spirit, in good faith. And I thank them, along with the other Members who are present and Congressman Walsh and others, and also the Members of the Senate who worked so expeditiously on this legislation.

The legislation calls for the creation of the Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority to monitor and certify District budgets and borrowing, to get the city back on solid financial footing. I expect to appoint the five members of this Authority very soon. All of them will have a commitment to this city, and all of them will either live or work here.

Our goals are clear. There are tough choices in the short term, but I am confident that this

legislation will lead to better services, a more responsive government, to safer streets, and to a stronger city for the citizens of this District. All of them deserve that, and America needs that.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Marion Barry of the District of Columbia and David Clarke, District of Columbia Council president. H.R. 1345, approved April 17, was assigned Public Law No. 104-8.

Statement on Signing the Executive Order on Classified National Security Information

April 17, 1995

Today I have signed an Executive order reforming the Government's system of secrecy. The order will lift the veil on millions of existing documents, keep a great many future documents from ever being classified, and still maintain necessary controls over information that legitimately needs to be guarded in the interests of national security.

In issuing this order, I am seeking to bring the system for classifying, safeguarding, and declassifying national security information into line with our vision of American democracy in the post-Cold War world.

This order strikes an appropriate balance. On the one hand, it will sharply reduce the permitted level of secrecy within our Government, making available to the American people and posterity most documents of permanent historical value that were maintained in secrecy until now.

On the other, the order enables us to safeguard the information that we must hold in confidence to protect our Nation and our citizens. We must continue to protect information that is critical to the pursuit of our national security interests. There are some categories of information—for example, the war plans we may employ or the identities of clandestine human assets—that must remain protected.

This order also will reduce the sizable costs of secrecy—the tangible costs of needlessly guarding documents and the intangible costs of depriving ourselves of the fullest possible flow of information.

This order establishes many firsts: Classifiers will have to justify what they classify; employees will be encouraged and expected to challenge improper classification and protected from ret-

ribution for doing so; and large-scale declassification won't be dependent on the availability of individuals to conduct a line-by-line review. Rather, we will automatically declassify hundreds of millions of pages of information that were classified in the past 50 years.

Similarly, we will no longer tolerate the excesses of the current system. For example, we will resolve doubtful calls about classification in favor of keeping the information unclassified. We will not permit the reclassification of information after it has been declassified and disclosed under proper authority. We will authorize agency heads to balance the public interest in disclosure against the national security interest in making declassification decisions. And, we will no longer presumptively classify certain categories of information, whether or not the specific information otherwise meets the strict standards for classification. At the same time, however, we will maintain every necessary safeguard and procedure to assure that appropriately classified information is fully protected.

Taken together, these reforms will greatly reduce the amount of information that we classify in the first place and the amount that remains classified. Perhaps most important, the reforms will create a classification system that Americans can trust to protect our national security in a reasonable, limited, and cost-effective manner.

In keeping with my goals and commitments, this order was drafted in an unprecedented environment of openness. We held open hearings and benefitted from the recommendations of interested Committees of Congress and non-governmental organizations, groups, businesses, and individuals. The order I have signed today is stronger because of the advice we received